

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Home > Research Program > Responses to Information Requests



Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

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Colombia: Procedures and documents required to obtain a passport from within Colombia, including processing times; procedures and documents required to replace a lost or stolen passport, and to renew an expired passport, including from abroad; the appearance of the passport

Research Directorate. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Ottawa

1. Passport Authority

The Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the government agency responsible for the issuance of Colombian passports (Colombia n.d.a). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Coordinator of the Passports' Internal Working Group for the North Branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that all Colombians, regardless of age, must have their own passport in order to leave the country (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011).

2. Types of Passports

According to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, there are five types of passports available to citizens (ibid. n.d.a):

- Regular Passport (Pasaporte ordinario): issued to Colombian citizens within the country and at diplomatic missions abroad (ibid. n.d.b). It is machine-readable (ibid. n.d.d), has 32 pages and is valid for 10 years (ibid. n.d.b).
- Machine-Readable Executive Passport (Pasaporte ejecutivo con zona de lectura mecánica): issued to Colombian citizens within the country and at diplomatic missions abroad (ibid. n.d.c). It has 48 pages and is valid for 10 years (ibid.).
- Emergency Passport (Pasaporte de emergencia): issued to Colombian citizens within the country and at diplomatic missions abroad when there is an immediate need for a travel document (ibid. n.d.d). It contains eight pages and is valid for seven months (ibid.). Citizens can request an emergency passport at the same time that they submit their application for a machine-readable regular passport (ibid.).
- Border Passport (Pasaporte fronterizo): issued to Colombian citizens in Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela through Colombia's diplomatic missions (ibid. n.d.e). The border passport is only valid for travel between Colombia and the country from which it was issued (ibid.). It has 28 pages and is valid for 10 years (ibid.).
- Exempt Passport (Pasaporte exento): issued to Colombian citizens at diplomatic missions abroad and through another state with which Colombia has signed a [translation] "memorandum of understanding" (ibid. n.d.f). It is used only to return to Colombia or to travel to the nearest Colombian consulate and is valid for 30 days (ibid.).

The Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issues machine-readable diplomatic and official passports to persons identified in Decree 2877 of 2001 (ibid. 2011, Art. 7-8), as well as ground crew booklets to crew members of authorized transportation carriers for a 12-month period (ibid. n.d.g). Ground crew booklets are issued to Colombian citizens and permanent residents (ibid.). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issues machine-readable travel documents to

[translation]

stateless persons, asylees, refugees and foreigners in Colombia who do not have a diplomatic or consular representation in the State, and to other foreigners who, in the opinion of the Ministry, are unable to obtain passports from their State of origin. The booklet has twelve (12) pages. (ibid. 2011, Art. 9)

2.1 Appearance of Passports

The regular and emergency passports contain the following information fields: surname, given names, nationality, date of birth, national identity document (cédula de ciudadanía) number, sex, place of birth, date of issue, date of expiry, issuing office, signature of the passport holder and a photo image (ibid. n.d.o; ibid. n.d.p). The information fields are written in both Spanish and English (ibid.). The information page also includes a strip or zone at the bottom of the page on which to include machine-readable information (ibid.). Regular passports are a burgundy colour (ibid. n.d.o), and emergency passports are grey (ibid. n.d.p). See attachments 1 and 2 for samples of the passports.

2.2 Machine-Readable Passports

Colombia introduced machine-readable passports in July 2010 in Bogota and gradually in governors' offices and consulates since August (ibid. 18 Aug. 2010). Machine-readable passports are issued at all passport offices, except in three governors' offices and 14 consulates due to [translation] "technical difficulties" (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011). Conventional passports that are not machine-readable will continue to be issued at all passport offices until 24 November 2015 (ibid. 2011, Art. 3), after which they must be replaced (ibid. n.d.k). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinator indicated that Colombia has not yet established a date for the introduction of biometric passports (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011).

3. Procedures to Obtain or Renew Passports from Within Colombia

To obtain a regular, executive or emergency passport from within Colombia, Colombian citizens must go in person (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c) to one of the three offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bogota, or to one of the 25 governors' offices across Colombia (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011). They must also complete an application form (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c). A passport application form on the Embassy of Colombia in Canada website indicates that the applicant must provide personal information such as his or her identity document number and the place in which it was issued, and his or her full name and date of birth; information from the previous passport such as passport number, date and place of issue, and reason for the change; and information about his or her parents, including their full names, identity document numbers, nationality, address and telephone number (ibid.).

In addition to the application form, the applicant must present any previous passport as well as the original version of a valid cédula de ciudadanía (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c), which, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Circular No. 4* of 2011, is [translation] "yellow with holograms" (ibid. 2 Mar. 2011). The applicant must also pay the required fee (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c). If applicants have changed any information on their cédula and have not yet received a new card, they must provide a copy of their birth certificate (Registro Civil de Nacimiento) and demonstrate that they have submitted a request to update the card by providing a *contraseña* (ibid.), a receipt with a picture of the applicant that is stamped by the National Civil Status Registry to prove that the new cédula is being processed (ibid. n.d.q). If the applicant does not have a valid, original cédula, the Ministry will issue an emergency passport valid for no more than six months as long as the person provides a *contraseña* (ibid.). The process to obtain a new cédula takes up to six months from within Colombia or nine months if applying through consulates outside the country (ibid. n.d.m).

Alternatively, the applicant can complete an electronic form available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c). The online application form requires the type and number of the applicant's identity document, the date and place of issue, his or her full name, gender, height, date and place of birth, and contact information (ibid. n.d.l). Even if submitting the application form electronically, the applicant must still formalize the application in person at any of the passport offices (ibid. n.d.b).

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinator, conventional passports are issued at the time of application by the passport office (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011). Machine-readable passports, however, are printed only in Bogota and take two to three days to be delivered to any of the passport offices in Colombia (ibid.). Emergency passports are issued the same day (ibid. n.d.d).

3.1 Obtaining Passports for Minors

When applying for a passport, minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent, a legal representative, or a third party authorized with a notarized document (ibid. 2 Mar. 2011). For children under the age of seven, the Ministry requires the child's original birth certificate (Registro Civil de Nacimiento) issued by the office at which the child's birth was registered with the Unique Personal Identification Number (Número Único de Identificación Personal, NUIP) (ibid.). For children between the ages of seven and eighteen, the Ministry requires an original copy of the birth certificate with the Personal Identification Number (Número de Identificación Personal, NIP) or the NUIP, as well as the original Identity Card for minors (Tarjeta de Identidad) (ibid.).

3.2 Lost or Stolen Passports

To replace a lost or stolen passport, a person must submit, in addition to the documents specified for obtaining a new passport, a report for the lost or stolen travel document issued by a [translation] "competent authority" (ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c; ibid. n.d.d).

4. Procedures to Obtain or Renew Passports from Abroad

The procedures and documents required for obtaining a regular, executive or emergency passport from abroad are the same as those for obtaining a passport from within Colombia except that, instead of a passport office in Colombia, they must go in person to one of the Colombian consulates abroad, present any previous passports, as well as an identity document, and pay the fee (ibid. n.d.h; ibid. n.d.i). Alternatively, the person can fill out the online application form, but still the applicant must formalize the application in person at any of the passport offices (ibid.).

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conventional passports are issued by the Colombian missions and consulates at the time of the application (ibid. 7 Oct. 2011). Since machine-readable passports are printed only in Bogota, they take three to four days to be delivered to any of the missions (ibid.).

4.1 Obtaining Passports for Minors

When applying for a passport while abroad, minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent, a legal representative, or a third party authorized with a notarized document (ibid. 2 Mar. 2011). The Ministry requires the birth certificate and the Identity Card for minors (ibid.). If the minor does not have the Identity Card, the consul must initiate the process for obtaining one and may issue a regular, machine-readable passport in the meantime (ibid.).

4.2 Lost or Stolen Passports

To replace a lost or stolen travel document, the person must submit, in addition to the documents specified for obtaining a new passport, a report for the lost or stolen passport issued by a [translation] "competent authority" or complete a [translation] "sworn statement" at any Colombian consulate abroad (ibid. n.d.h; ibid. n.d.i; ibid. n.d.j).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Attachments

1. Colombia. N.d. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Sample passport (pasaporte).
2. Colombia. N.d. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Sample emergency passport (pasaporte de emergencia).

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